

## Second Chances by The\_Awesome\_Frost\_Ninja

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**Genre:** Angst with a Happy Ending, Deadlights (IT), Eddie Kaspbrak Lives, Fix-It, Fluff and Angst, Hurt/Comfort, M/M, Major Character Injury, Sorry Stan is still dead, reddie deserved better and those are just facts, rip Stan

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**Summary:**

'Eddie was safe and more importantly, alive. That was all Richie cared about. The pain was nothing compared to the relief.'

Richie gets another chance to change things, but ends up paying the price for it.

# 1. A difference is made

## Author's Note:

A/N: I never thought in a million years that I'd be writing fanfic for the clown movie. Well.... Here we are because the clown movie made me sad. And here's fact. Richie and Eddie deserved better and Pennywise is a homophobic demon alien clown. So, canon? What's canon? I only know fix-it now.

Also just a few side notes, I've never read the book. I have only watched the films, so my knowledge of canon will stick to the 2017 and 2019 films. And whilst Stan is dead (it hurt me to keep him dead), but he will be lovingly talked about throughout the future of this fic via the Losers.

Richie smiled at the carving.

## **R + E**

He held the words of Stan's letter close to his heart, every word. But there was one part specifically that hit him in a way that he knew wouldn't hit the other Losers.

*Be who you want to be. Be proud.*

Those words had cut deep into him. For Stan he wanted to be brave and do as he asked. Richie felt tears welling up once more, his hand gently tracing over the 'E'.

Eddie was his first and only love. Even when he didn't remember him, Richie could never bring himself to harbour feelings for another and he never knew why until he came back to Derry.

And now, Eddie would never know. Richie would have to live his life in regret, knowing that he never told the man he loved how he felt before he died, alone. His body left at the bottom of a collapsing

cavern.

“I-” Richie choked on his words. “I wish I told you. I wish you were still here.”

Richie let his tears fall until he noticed something that was far beyond strange. He stared as his tears were going forwards and up merely floating in front of him.

“What the fu-”

Suddenly it was like he was being pulled backwards.

Richie was falling and then suddenly it was like was falling in reverse. And as a weird whiplash he felt himself falling again, but this time he landed hard on the ground.

Richie had to blink a few times, his eyes adjusting to the dark.

“Hey Rich. Richie, hey wake up!”

*What?*

Richie blinked a few times. His vision and mind both adjusting back into reality. Richie couldn’t help but just stare at what was in front of him, or rather, whom.

“Yeah! There he is! Hey buddy!”

*Eddie.*

“Hey Richie, listen. I think I got it, man!”

It was then in that moment that Richie’s mind went racing as he realised what was going on. The first explanation he thought of was that he was having some sort of terrible breakdown. That the accumulation of Stan’s letter and returning to the Kissing Bridge where he had once carved his and Eddie’s initials had finally caused him to mentally snap.

The second explanation he could think of was the deadlights, which to Richie felt like one big lie because it couldn’t be real. But with one

proper look at Eddie, Richie knew that it was real.

For the week that followed when they had killed *It*, Richie had tried to imprint every detail of Eddie's in his mind. Any memory he could grasp was a treasure. It was why he lingered in Derry; just in case their memories were to disappear again. Richie never wanted to forget Eddie.

But with Eddie hovering over him with a dumb grin on his face, Richie could see every detail in his face, down to the dimples in his smile to the smallest of freckles.

No matter how hard Richie had tried, he could never remember those small and precise details. But one look at the real deal, and he knew.

Richie knew that there was still the chance that his mind was playing one big sick joke, but he couldn't bring himself to care.

It felt real enough.

But such relief as soon as it came was doomed to be short-lived.

"I think I killed It! I did! I think I killed --"

*No.* As soon as he heard those words, Richie knew what was about to happen next. But it wasn't going to happen again. Richie immediately jolted into action.

In one swift movement, Richie had simultaneously grabbed a hold of Eddie and flipped their positions. Richie was trying to roll them out of the way, but there wasn't any time to completely evade what happened next.

Eddie was in the middle of saying something along the lines of asking Richie what the hell he was doing, but the words vanished.

All Richie knew over the sounds of muffled screams, which he assumed came from Eddie and Beverly, was the hot pain through his side.

Richie struggled to grasp what had happened after that because the next thing he knew was pain and hovering over Eddie, then next

Richie felt his face pressed against a rock. He concluded that *It* must've thrown him.

Amongst the confusion, Richie felt himself being hauled up into a sitting position. He saw two blobs that resembled people.

*I don't have my glasses on*, Richie realised.

"Richie! Hey, Rich! We've got you. We've got you." It was Bill's voice, with not a stutter in sight.

"Hold still for a second, Richie." That voice was Mike.

Suddenly he felt someone placing his glasses back on his face. And then very clearly, he saw Mike and Bill in front of him. The other Losers quickly running over to him. Their eyes glued to Richie's bleeding side.

Eddie paused for a moment, his breath getting caught in his throat. Eddie forced himself out of it. He had almost let Richie die with the Stan-head earlier in the house because he couldn't react out of fear. He wasn't about to let himself do that again.

"He's losing too much blood." Eddie immediately pulled off his jacket. With shaking hands, Eddie used both hands to push it against Richie's wound.

Richie let out a sharp pained gasp at the pressure.

*That must be good*, Eddie silently thought to himself because if Richie still felt pain, he was still alive. In other words, Eddie found what solace he could in such a horrible situation.

Richie on the other hand, couldn't help but stare at Eddie.

Beverly glanced over at where Pennywise was attempting to claw at them. Luckily *It* was too big for the space down the cavern.

"Come out and play, Losers!"

Ben immediately went searching for another exit that Pennywise wasn't currently occupying.

Ignoring the clown, Eddie lightly tapped the side of Richie's face, making sure that Richie was focusing on him, which unknown to Eddie he already was.

"How are you doing, Rich?" Eddie asked.

"I got shish kebabbed by a fucking alien clown," Richie coughed. "You know, just an average Tuesday in Derry."

What Richie had wanted to do from that was make someone laugh, or at the least crack a smile. Instead, Eddie applied more pressure to Richie's side, causing him to sharply inhale.

"He needs a hospital. We need to get him out of here!"

"How?" Beverly asked. "We have no way out."

"Guys! I found a passage out!" Ben called out.

"That's one problem gone, but what about *It*?"

Richie knew what they needed to do, but he didn't want to get straight into the fact that he had already lived through it in the deadlights. Instead Richie opted with what got them to realise it initially. Eddie's story.

He gripped at Eddie's arm.

"What is it, Rich?" Eddie's full attention was on him.

"The...The leper...." Richie struggled to get the words out. Feeling his strength leaving him so quickly was frightening as it was painful. Bleeding out was no walk in the park.

Eddie's eyebrows furrowed. "What?"

"You were brave. *It*... *It* was scared."

Richie saw as the cogs in Eddie's brain began to turn. When they were young, Eddie tended to have his thoughts always written all over his face. But maybe that was because Richie had always paid close attention. Almost 25 years of missing time together, but that

was something that hadn't changed.

Eddie's mind was reeling. He hadn't told Richie what had happened with the leper, yet he was talking like he knew. Eddie was about to ask once again what Richie meant, but suddenly he was hit with an epiphany.

He was brave against the leper. He held it by *It's* throat, choking the life out of it. Eddie would've succeeded if it weren't for the mountain of black projectile vomit.

"*It* was weak." Eddie said, realising what Richie had meant.

Richie tried to smile at seeing the metaphorical lightbulb appear over Eddie, but his smile came out as more of a grimace.

"What are you talking about?" Bill finally asked.

"When it appeared to me as a leper, I got a hold of *It*. I was choking *It*. I fought back, holding on to *It's* throat. I made *It* seem so small."

Richie could practically see the light bulbs going off in the other's head.

"The Shokopiwah people," Mike's eyes widened. "All living things must abide by the form they inhabit."

Beverly's eyes widened as well.

"The cavern on the way in. *It* will have to be small to fit through. *It* should be small enough to kill."

"Guys." Richie said, while his voice sounded weaker, it had never sounded so clear.

All eyes were on their beloved 'Trashmouth'. The look of determination was burning in his eyes. Richie gritted his teeth, attempting to swallow down his pain to sound clear.

"There's another way to make someone feel small," Richie looked over to Mike. The memory of what he had said in the life Richie had thought he had lived came rippling back. "*It's* just a clown."

Mike blinked letting it sink in. A small smile broke out on his face.

“Richie, you genius!”

But really, Richie knew that he couldn’t take credit for the idea. If anything, Mike was calling himself the genius.

Richie smiled.

“Go get that motherfucking clown.”

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Richie hated how he couldn’t focus on what was going on. They were out of the small cavern. In the corner of Richie’s eye, he saw Ben running over to join the fray. He must’ve helped Eddie carry him out back into the open.

It felt like he was running through a blur until Eddie was back to fixing his gaze on him. Eddie moved his jacket away to inspect the wound again.

“What’s the verdict Dr K?” Richie didn’t mean for it to sound like a whisper, but he had no energy to talk properly.

Eddie didn’t reply, instead he pushed the jacket back down harder on to Richie’s side.

A sharp pained gasp slipped out of Richie.

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry!” Eddie frowned. “You’re going to be okay. Just hang a little while longer.”

Richie wasn’t an idiot. He knew what Eddie was doing was out of desperation. They both knew why. A truth no one wanted to accept. Richie was dying.

Oddly enough the thought of that didn’t scare Richie. Instead, he let himself just stare at Eddie for a moment. Richie let himself take it all



in. What he was seeing wasn't a lost memory. It was real. Eddie was with him. Eddie was safe and more importantly, alive. That was all Richie cared about. The pain was nothing compared to the relief.

"This....." Richie began, his voice resigned, "This is okay."

Eddie's eyes almost bulged out of his head.

"How the fuck is this okay!? Don't you dare go saying shit like that!"

Richie slowly placed his hand over Eddie's, causing the other to look the other in the eyes. The moment Eddie looked back into his eyes, Richie only had one thought.

*Eddie's alive and he will continue to live.*

It was then that Richie knew that he did not have a single regret.

He could die at peace knowing that Eddie was alive. That was enough for Richie.

"I...I wanna tell you something."

"No," Eddie shook his head as tears began to well up in his eyes. "Don't give me that last words goodbye bullshit. You're not going to die. I'm not going to let you! Tell me after we're out of here, okay?"

Richie wanted to smile, and retort "*says the guys whose last words were 'I fucked your mother'*" but he knew it wouldn't have made sense. That was a different Eddie – well, not so much different Eddie, but a different future. Richie didn't know even if he should've called it that. The deadlights were hard to explain.

Regardless, Richie knew that while the others were taking down the clown, they still needed all hands-on deck for the final blow, or squeeze if what he saw was right.

Richie attempted to push Eddie's hand off him.

"You...You need to go help the others."

"What? No!" Eddie hissed. "I'm not leaving you!"

"I'll be okay for a few minutes," Richie took a moment to catch his breath. "But...But right now the others need all the help they can get."

Eddie hesitated. "Promise me you won't die."

Richie knew better to make a promise he knew that he couldn't keep. With every moment he could feel himself slipping further and further away.

He was dying. A simple promise wouldn't stop that from happening.

"I promise."

Richie just hoped that not breaking a promise to Eddie of all people was stronger than death.

Eddie immediately and swiftly wrapped his jacket around Richie's waist close to the wound, tightly tying it around the bleeding. Eddie placed Richie's hands over it and pushed down.

"Keep pressure on that!"

"Go!" Richie's yell was quite pathetic, but Eddie complied regardless.

The quicker they killed the clown, the quicker they could get Richie out of there. Eddie scattered to his feet and over to where the fight was. Never had Richie seen Eddie run toward danger so quickly. But despite what Richie thought, it wasn't bravery that drove Eddie to run toward Pennywise; it was rage.

Eddie ran over to where they had the small and dishevelled Pennywise pinned.

"I'm the eater of worlds!" *It* pathetically insisted.

Eddie took one look at the arm-claw that had pierced through Richie, and the next thing he knew, he was ripping it off the dying clown. Eddie threw the arm to the ground like it weighed nothing.

Beverly was the most shocked at the action, but she kept chanting 'clown' along with the others.

“You’re just a fucking clown!” Eddie hissed, joining in with the other’s chant.

They had Pennywise back to the wall of a rock.

“A clown,” Mike bravely stared *It* down. “With a scared beating heart.”

“Would you look at that,” Pennywise forced a smile in it’s weakened state. “Someone cheated this time.”

Simultaneously all the Loser’s had the same collective thought.

*What the fuck does that mean?*

But before they could give another thought, they all squeezed *It*’s heart. As Eddie helped to squeeze it, he couldn’t help but feel a strange feeling like *It* was talking about him. He quickly brushed it off as he and the others watched as he faded into nothing. And just hovering above them, the deadlights vanished.

They all let themselves have a moment of relief and victory. Bill affectionately resting his head against Mike’s, as Ben and Beverly grabbed on to Eddie in a semi hug.

Eddie couldn’t help but let out a small laugh.

They did it. They had killed Pennywise for good.

Eddie suddenly got hit back with reality.

“Richie. Guys, Richie!”

Immediately the joy was gone, and they all rushed back over to where Eddie had left Richie.

*Don’t be dead. Don’t be dead.* Eddie chanted to himself. He felt as he saw Richie staring down at the same spot.

“Richie?” Bill cautiously asked.

No one knew what they’d do if Richie didn’t respond to Bill. Luckily,

they didn't have to find out. They felt like they could take a breath when Richie's eyes suddenly darted upwards toward them. Seeing the others, he tried to smile.

"Did you kill *It*?" Richie asked in a whisper.

"Yeah. Yeah, we did," Eddie smiled, kneeling beside him. "Let's get you up."

Eddie tried to tug Richie to his feet but instead Richie's legs remained still and he shook his head.

"I don't think I can move." Richie said, almost like a confession.

He saw as Eddie's smile dropped from his face. Richie really didn't want to see that.

Then suddenly, the whole cavern was all beginning to come down. Richie felt the echo of the memory of Eddie's death. Richie had left for less than a few minutes and Eddie had died, alone. If the others hadn't dragged him out, Richie would've stayed with Eddie and died too. But that wasn't what their new future had in store. Not for Eddie at least.

*Eddie will live.*

"Just go. It's all about to come down." Richie said.

"No, Richie no!" Eddie pleaded, half was that Richie would stop talking like that, the other was that he couldn't believe Richie was giving up.

"That's not happening!" Mike snapped.

"There isn't enough time." Richie insisted. He didn't want to be the cause if they didn't get out. If he had to die there, he would be okay with that, or at least that's what he told himself.

"Like hell there isn't!" Ben forcibly slung Richie over his shoulder. "Let's go!"

Richie didn't have the strength to fight back. Besides, even if he

hadn't been impaled, the chances of him against Ben and all what Richie assumed to be his eight abs, were slim.

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The Loser's didn't waste anytime running and climbing back through everything. Richie couldn't say that he remembered a lot of it, but what he did pick up on was the fact he was being tossed around and shoved like a rag doll through tight spaces. It was a good thing that he couldn't really feel pain anymore..... but the more Richie thought about that, he realised that maybe that wasn't a good thing.

By some miracle, they all were steps out just as the house collapsed. *It* may have been dead, but there wasn't any time to celebrate.

"Check Richie. Check Richie!" Bill barked, noticing how Richie's eyes were shut as he was draped over Ben's shoulder.

Mike ran straight for the nearest car, wasting no time to gawk at the destruction of the Neibolt house. Beverly and Eddie kneeled as Ben lowered Richie to the ground. Bill was standing idly by watching as Mike ran.

Eddie reached out a shaking hand to Richie's next, desperately checking for a pulse. Eddie felt a breath slam back into him as he felt one. It was weak but it was there.

Richie opened his eyes at the touch, but they slowly began to droop again as soon as they were open.

"Hey, hey! No! Open your eyes, Richie!" Eddie placed both hands on the sides of Richie's face. "Come on, look at me! Look at me!"

Richie felt a ghost of a memory come back to him with those words. It was the first time they faced *It* in the Neibolt house. It was coming towards them, claws out and sharp. The roles were reversed, and Richie had grabbed on to Eddie's face, yelling at Eddie to look at him. Richie remembered thinking that if they were going to die in that moment, he hadn't wanted their last memory to be of a killer clown,

but he'd rather it of each other. Eddie had his arm broken, but they both lived through that, they all did.

Richie's eyes were getting heavier, but Richie forced himself to open them. He wanted to be able to see Eddie, but his vision was blurry, and he could only see his outline.

"Where are my glasses?" Richie asked, squinting his eyes. He thought that he must've lost them as they were leaving.

"Richie," Beverly held back tears. "You *are* wearing your glasses."

"Oh..." That's all what Richie could muster. He knew he didn't have much time left.

Mike came to a screeching halt on the side of the road. Ben didn't care at all that Mike was driving his car so carelessly. Ben knew it was dumb to leave the keys to his car in ignition, but it was the isolated Neibolt Street and in that moment, it was like a ray of hope.

"Come on! Let's go!" Ben lifted Richie into the back seat. Eddie was close behind. They all rapidly squeezed in the back with Bill in the front seat. Ben was still out the car looking for something in his car's trunk.

"Ben, hurry the fuck up!" Bill yelled; his eyes glued on Richie.

"Ben!" Beverly desperately called.

Richie was still slowly blinking at the commotion around him. The yelling didn't make much sense to him, it was all starting to fizzle out.

"I got it! I got it!" Ben leapt into the backseat. Before he had shut the door, Mike was flooring it. The Derry hospital was about fifteen minutes away from the Neibolt house. Mike planned to get there in five minutes if not shorter. He knew Derry inside and out. Every route and every short cut.

"I don't know how much this is going to help." Ben showed what he had grabbed.

It was a first aid kit. Eddie practically snatched it from his hands. Beverly half cradled Richie to sit up as Eddie fumbled through the small kit for whatever he could use.

Eddie's hands shook as he untied his blood-soaked jacket from Richie's side. It was too much blood, but Eddie refused to lose his cool. Not after almost getting Richie killed once and saving him only for Richie to take the hit.

He wasn't going to let him down. Not again. Eddie lifted Richie's shirt and immediately he dressed and began to wrap the wound as expertly as he could. He may have not ended up being a doctor like Beverly had hoped, but he knew enough about first aid.

"You're going to be okay, honey." Beverly kept soothingly running her hand through Richie's hair. "We're getting you to a hospital. Just sit tight."

Eddie was done, but he took notice of right away that Richie had barely flinched as he wrapped the gauze around him. On top of it all, Richie had been quiet.

"Hey, hey, hey!" Eddie cradled Richie's face in his hands. It must've been the right choice because Richie's gaze seemed to focus on him once again. "You're going to be okay, alright? You're going to be okay. Just stay with me here, okay, Rich? Richie?"

Dying gave a strange feeling of apathy. There was no shame or fear. It would've felt peaceful if he weren't so aware of what he was leaving behind, but it was also with each passing moment that he felt himself not having the strength left to care even if he wanted to.

*Well, I suppose, if I have one last chance to be brave and say something, now's as good as time as any.*

With what strength he had left, Richie chose to speak.

"Eds."

"Yeah? What is it, buddy?"

"Eds, I've always....I..." *I love you.*

Richie couldn't finish what he was saying. The last of his strength slipped away from him. His eyes shut not knowing whether his last memory was going to be of Eddie's worried face down in that cave.



## 2. A choice is made

### Notes for the Chapter:

A/N: Sorry about the late update! This would've been out a lot sooner but out of the blue my parents bought a dog!! I got to name him. His name is Obi, after Obi Wan Kenobi. I love him!

Alright, enough about my new puppy, and back to the story. This chapter became far bigger than I anticipated, so I hope it's worth the wait!

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Five hours.

It had been five hours since they had finally killed It.

And it had been five hours since they had made it to the hospital once Richie had fallen unconscious in the car.

Eddie had gone hysterical, screaming at Mike to drive faster.

They came running in half crazed, demanding a doctor for Richie. The staff very quickly rushed toward them, whisking Richie away.

*"40-year-old male. Large laceration through lower abdomen."*

*"He's gone into hypovolemic shock. We need to prepare a blood transfusion of about 5 units. Stat!"*

Richie disappeared in a flurry of medical staff and the Losers were left standing there.

With Beverly covered in blood, they rang the cops on the spot. Bill, being the masterful storyteller, made up a convincing story mere minutes before the cops arrived so they all had time to have the same story to tell.

The story was that they had decided to explore the abandoned house on Neibolt when Henry Bowers found them, practically destroying the house with them inside. Whilst Bill hadn't known about Bowers' because he was chasing after the kid that Pennywise was after, Mike managed to give him the run down, insisting they use him for the story.

Richie's wound was told to both the doctors and police to also have been Henry Bowers' doing, claiming that he had impaled him. And that in their desperation, they rushed Richie to hospital, not knowing where Bowers' had gone.

Whilst Bowers' death could easily be viewed as self-defence, it was easier to say that since the Loser's had already hidden the body and it made for a more convincing story.

Luckily for the Losers, the police in Derry didn't seem to question them much else after they got some statements from them. They left after the Loser's had insisted that they hadn't planned on leaving the hospital. They probably wouldn't have gotten away like that in any other place other than Derry, but after all the town put them through, it was about time they got a lucky break.

The hospital staff seemed less docile after the police officers seemed satisfied and left. They had approached Eddie, insisting to look at and change the bandage on his face.

Eddie told them no, much to the surprise of all the Losers. Eddie had been practically rolling in filth and bacteria and he didn't want to take that opportunity to get it cleaned? That's when they realised how effected Eddie was from what happened to Richie.

It wasn't until some insistence from Beverly that he finally accepted the nurse's request.

Eddie opened his eyes and he stared back at the clock as each second ticked by.

It had been two hours since the stab wound on his cheek was stitched up properly and cleaned.

Eddie rested his head against the wall. He hated hospitals; his mother would take him frequently as a boy over the smallest of things.

As an adult, he hated them even more. He especially hated the waiting room they were in. The chairs were uncomfortable, the tv wasn't working, and the magazines were years out of date.

But the worst part is that there was still no news on Richie. They asked a nurse every 30 minutes, but no one knew what was happening.

*"We'll do everything we can. All you can do now is stay in the waiting room until there is a new development in his condition."* Is what they were told every time.

The others hadn't entertained the thought of leaving to get cleaned up. It was a silent agreement amongst them that no one would leave until they knew if Richie was okay.

Eddie looked around. In the waiting room they were in it was only himself and the Losers. He figured that since they refused to leave, the staff had purposely put them in a separate room from others in the hospital.

Bill and Mike were intensely focused on either something on the floor or they were both hard in thought. Eddie didn't have to have to take a wild guess at which one was correct.

In the meanwhile, Beverly quietly rested her head against Ben's shoulder. The two looked both sombre but somewhat comforted that they had each other.

Eddie couldn't help but feel a smile prick at his lips. The aura around the two seemed different and Eddie had a hunch as to why. He could imagine would Richie would say at the sight.

*'Well it's about fucking time!'*

Eddie found himself letting out a quiet huff of laughter at the thought. Even though so much time had passed, Richie really hadn't changed all that much. Eddie on the other hand felt like he went backwards once he had forgotten Derry. And despite everything

horrible he had gone through since returning, Eddie was finally beginning to feel like his true self.

Deep down, Eddie couldn't help but wonder what his life would have been like if he had never forgotten Derry.

A vague image started to form in his head in the form of a daydream. Eddie saw himself in a nice house, sitting on a couch with something furry on his lap. Probably a dog that his mother and wife had always told him never to go near. As he petted it, he saw a wedding ring around his finger, but it was different to the golden one he had. It was white gold, a type of jewellery that Myra didn't like. Eddie then saw himself look towards the door as someone walked in. Before he could imagine the figure that was his partner, Eddie shook himself out of the daydream.

Eddie didn't want to think about it anymore. There was no point in imagining what could have been. The facts, whilst painful to accept, were that he did forget. They all did. And Richie was in the hospital because he had protected him.

It was just as Eddie was going to rest his eyes once more that an older man in scrubs walked in.

"Family of Richard Tozier?"

Everyone was on their feet in an instance and they hastily gathered around the doctor.

"I'm Dr Simins, I'm Richard's doctor."

Mike was the first to ask.

"How is he?"

"Well," the doctor began, "When he was impaled it missed all the vital organs, but it did manage to nick at a few of the larger more vital arteries. The last-minute bandaging held off the bleeding just long enough to get him here to us. Mr Tozier wouldn't have made it here without it."

"So, he's going to be okay?" Beverly asked hopefully.

The Loser's felt their stomachs drop as the doctor's face remained indifferent.

"Possibly."

They all felt fear and confusion spike through them.

"What does that mean?" Ben slowly asked.

"It means that we're preparing him for an emergency skin graft surgery. While we have managed to slow down the bleeding, but his wound is too large to seal up by usual means. But you all must know that while he's alive, he's very weak. There's a high chance that he won't survive the surgery. In his state, I'd say you all need to prepare for the worst."

It took a moment for the doctor's words to sink in. Bill was just about to open his mouth to say something, but it was Eddie who snapped.

"That's not good enough!"

The doctor was obviously shocked at the sudden rage coming from the shorter man.

"Please sir, I'm -"

"I don't wanna hear it!" Eddie yelled, pointing aggressively at the doctor. "You are a doctor! You are meant to save lives! So, don't give me that bullshit! You get your ass in there and do your fucking job and save him!"

The others said nothing, only staring at Eddie in awe at the sudden outburst. The doctor was silent for a long moment. His face blank until suddenly he began to slowly nod.

"I'll do what I can."

The doctor hurriedly left, and Eddie was left heavily panting. Ben slowly went to place a hand on Eddie's shoulder.

"Eddie-"

He cut off Ben, shoving off his hand and storming out of the room. They all made a move to go after him, but it was Beverly who raised her hand towards the others to stop. They silently understood and let Beverly be the one to go after Eddie.

Beverly found him outside the hospital pacing backwards and forwards, barely noticing that Beverly was standing idly nearby.

"This is my fault," Eddie kept repeating himself. "This is my fault. This is all my fault."

"Eddie, honey, look at me," she grabbed a hold of both his shoulders, forcing him to look at her. "None of this is your fault."

"How can it not be?" Eddie humourlessly scoffed. "Richie never would be in here if he didn't take the hit."

"Eddie, listen to me. If he didn't do that than it would've gone straight through you and you would've died."

"You don't know that."

If Eddie had been paying attention, he would've seen how Beverly's face fell. Her eyes saying how she held a secret. Whatever it was, Beverly decided not to speak of it because she knew it wasn't something that Eddie needed in that moment.

She knew that what he needed was reassurance. The secret she kept was better saved for another time.

Beverly's hands dropped from Eddie's shoulders to gently reach out for his hand.

"Richie is going to live," she squeezed his hand. "Richie's a fighter. Always has been. He won't give up so easily. We all know that. And he wouldn't want you to blame yourself either. So, please Eddie, stop it."

Eddie felt like he heard Richie agreeing with her.

*She's right. While I'm touched that you're worried about me, you need to chill the hell out. I'll be fine, Eddie Spaghetti.*

Eddie couldn't help but smile, almost going to say 'don't call me that' aloud. Regardless, Beverly was right. Richie was a fighter. He wasn't going to go down without a fight.

Deep down, Eddie just hoped that Beverly was right, and that Richie would live.

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The waiting game begun all over again and quickly the Losers were losing their minds in the stress of the wait. No one could sit still for more than a few minutes at a time. Eddie's leg kept bouncing as he sat, leaning forwards, his hands folded together as he stared at the clock. Eddie religiously stared at how the red second hand kept ticking by.

With each second, Eddie felt like the clock got louder and louder, as if to mock him.

The wait was agonisingly painful.

It was nearing to the third hour of waiting when Dr Simins finally walked back into the room. The Losers crowded around the doctor. Beverly tightly holding Ben's hand in her own as they all approached the doctor.

"How is he?" Mike asked.

They both hoped and feared for what the answer was.

The doctor's stoic face shifted into a small smile. And it was when they saw that, they all felt relief beginning to spur in their chests.

"The surgery went well. While he lost a lot of blood, I am hopeful. When he wakes up, he ought to give you all his gratitude."

"*When he wakes up?*" Ben repeated. "So, you mean...?"

The doctor nodded, a tired smile on his face.

“He’s going to fine.”

They all let out a breath they had been holding. The stress that they had been all holding had come out in relieved tearless sobbing. Dr Simins allowed them to have their moment in peace.

“Can we see him?” Eddie asked.

The doctor nodded once more, leading them to Richie’s room.

“The anaesthesia will take a while to filter out of his system, so he may be unconscious for quite some time. The best thing for him is to get some rest, so I’ll ask you not to be too loud around him.”

The others nodded but hadn’t been listening all that closely to what the doctor was saying. All they cared about was that Richie was okay.

Dr Simins gestured to the door, room 19. As he walked away, they immediately piled into the room.

Richie was lying still on the bed. His face so pale. Eddie couldn’t help but focus on the fact that Richie’s chest slowly rose and fell with each breath. One of the simplest signs that Richie was still alive. And despite trying not to, Eddie couldn’t help but still have that little voice in his head telling him *‘this is all your fault’*.

Slowly, everyone made themselves comfortable somewhere in the cramped room, watching over Richie. The two chairs in the room beside the bedside were taken by Eddie and Beverly. The others were awkwardly propping themselves against a wall.

It was a few minutes of silence that Mike suddenly began to laugh. The others confusedly stared at him.

“Mikey? You okay?” Bill cautiously asked.

“Richie’s okay,” Mike began to grin. “It’s finally over. We made it. We killed *It*.”

The fact was finally sinking in and the others couldn’t help but feel joy, both at the death of the clown but also for Mike, who had never forgot and remained in the cursed town of Derry to stop Pennywise.



27 years of the waiting and horror and it was finally over.

*It* didn't get to have the final laugh by taking Richie after *It* already had taken Stanley from them. They won.

Their victory was finally starting to settle in, and they couldn't help but join in with Mike's relieved laughter. Well, all except for Eddie. His attention was still completely on Richie. He had decided that it wouldn't be a victory until Richie was awake.

It was only then that Eddie realised that Richie's glasses were missing. Not that he expected the nurses to place them on his face while he slept, but it wasn't anywhere in sight. Eddie made a mental note to go hunting for where they were placed in the hospital later.

As Eddie watched Richie, he had discovered something he hadn't noticed before. Richie's eyelashes were unexpectantly long. It was an odd fact, but it also led for him to realise something else. Richie's eyes were beginning to twitch.

"Guys." Eddie whispered, his eyes remaining on Richie.

The small chatter around them came to a halt. They looked over to Eddie whom in turn was looking at Richie.

Richie's eyes were opening.... to a certain extent. It looked like he was squinting, which he very well could've been due to the fluorescent lights of the hospital room and the absence of his glasses, but no one knew for sure.

Beverly was the first of the Losers to react as the others stared in shock.

"Hey sweetie, it's Bev," Beverly pushed the hair out of his face. "All of us are here. You're in the hospital."

Richie noticeably tensed, but it wasn't because of Beverly's touch. However, she did move her hand from his hair to his arm thinking that it was. It took Richie a moment to moisten his dry lips as he attempted to speak.

"E..Eds," Richie's voice was terribly hoarse. "Is...is Eddie okay?"

After hearing that, Eddie couldn't help but feel an unfamiliar warm tinge growing in his stomach amongst the guilt.

Beverly caressed his arm with her thumb.

"He's okay, honey," she smiled, as Richie began to relax. "We all are."

And just like that, Richie shut his eyes and was out again, but this time he looked more at peace. It was like by knowing everyone was okay, that he could finally rest easy. At least, for the moment.

Eddie couldn't believe it.

Barely half conscious and that was what Richie had first asked? That *he* was okay specifically?

No one commented on it. Eddie couldn't tell whether it was because the others didn't think much of it or they did but didn't dare to say anything about it. Regardless, it was one of the last things on Eddie's mind.

Eddie swallowed a nervous lump in his throat. He barely noticed how his heart had fluttered, but that was no surprise. It was easy to ignore because it had happened a lot since returning to Derry. He thought it had sourced from his fear, but feeling it once more in that moment, Eddie couldn't help but question if it was ever fear at all.

---

They took turns in pairs leaving the hospital to go back to the Inn to get themselves cleaned up. Whilst Pennywise was gone and they were finally celebrating their victory, no one felt safe enough to go alone or to leave Richie unsupervised. No one doubted that they wouldn't feel safe for a while, not after everything that happened the past few days.

They all had half expected Eddie to want to be the first one to head back to the Inn, claiming it about all the germs that the filth of *It's*

lair would have harboured. It was the opposite. Eddie remained quiet and was the last to go back and shower and that was only after some coaxing from Ben who took him back even though he had just gotten back with Beverly.

Eddie was barely ten minutes in the shower. He didn't allow himself to relish in the fact how nice it felt to finally cleanse the filth off. In fact, he didn't give it too much thought. All he was thinking was that he needed to be as quick as he could to get back to the hospital and back to Richie.

Ben had attempted to make small talk on the car ride back.

"How are you holding up, Eddie?"

"Me?"

"Yeah, after everything you seem..." Ben paused to think of a good way to phrase it. "...quiet."

Eddie stared out the window.

"I'm just worried about Richie."

Ben knew that there was more to it, that much was obvious. But he also knew not to push Eddie anymore on the subject. So, instead, Ben silently nodded.

Eddie didn't want Ben to worry about him anymore, so he decided to press on a subject he knew that'd entertain them both.

"So, you and Bev-"

"What?" Ben's ears immediately were going red. "W-Who told you that?"

"No one, but c'mon, man," Eddie grinned. "It's obvious! You've got the whole vibe going on."

Ben swallowed, trying to play it off.

"It...It wasn't that obvious.... was it?"

“I think it’s cute,” Eddie smiled. “You and Bev, I mean.”

Ben kept silent after that; his ears completely flushed red. Eddie laughed at the sight.

Once they returned, Eddie and Ben hadn’t missed out on anything interesting. Mike and Bill had ‘borrowed’ some more chairs for Richie’s room so they could all sit down. Other than that, it had been uneventful. Richie remained unconscious, which surprised no one. Richie needed his rest. The Loser’s talked amongst the selves making their own ways to pass the time.

Mike had even brought some card games back with him once he was cleaned up. It was almost like their clubhouse days all over again.

They were playing an innocent game of go-fish when Eddie jolted at the feeling of his phone vibrating in his pocket. He barely remembered grabbing it when he returned to the Inn.

He pulled out his phone. The caller id immediately recognised the number.

*Myra*

It took him to remember that it was the name of his wife. So much had happened those few days and quite honestly, past when he spoke about her to the Losers, he hadn’t thought about her.

Which itself was a sign of what he hadn’t wanted to admit.

Truth be told of what Eddie hadn’t told the other Losers, was when he had left for Derry, he hadn’t left on the greatest terms with his wife. Myra had been hysterical, and that was putting that nicely.

Without even realising it until after he had gotten to Derry, Eddie had packed his things like he hadn’t intended on going back.

On his screen it had nearing to the 80<sup>th</sup> time she had tried to ring him in the past three days. And that didn’t include the number of texts.

Eddie knew that marriage was meant to be something decided with

no doubts in mind. But truth be told, Eddie was quite ambivalent about proposing to her. Something had always held him back from making that decision, but he never knew what. His mother on the other hand had been encouraging it from day one. Eddie eventually resigned to it, despite his hesitation.

Every day he had attempted to convince himself it was the right choice and that part of him that held him back was to be ignored.

Eddie never knew what was holding him back until he returned to Derry.

It could be chalked up to a few things, but the two most important things were his memories and his friends.

Eddie glanced back over Richie. A look of determination dawned over his face. He knew what he needed to do.

"I'll be back." Eddie muttered, hastily excusing himself from the room. He walked all the way outside before he answered, placing the phone to his ear.

"Myra."

*"Eddie! You finally picked up! Do you have any idea how worried I have been!?"*

"Myra, we need to talk."

She ignored him and kept ranting.

*"I can't believe you just got up and left the way you did, leaving me all alone! Please tell me you've at least been on your medication. You know how you get if you don't take your -"*

"Myra! Just listen for a minute, please."

She kept ignoring him.

*"- medication. You know how hopeless you are without it. I'm only reminding you because you're so far away from home! Are you keeping up with up with your prescriptions?"*

Eddie went silent, a sick feeling in his stomach began to grow. His silence obviously struck a nerve with his wife.

*"Why aren't you saying it back?" she whined, "Eddie, are you angry with me? Why are you angry with me? I haven't done anything wrong!"*

"I'm not – look. Please just listen to me, alright?"

There was finally quiet on the other end of the phone. Eddie tightened the grip on his phone. He was about to change his life for good.

"I think we should get a divorce."

There was a long silence over the phone. Eddie honestly hadn't been wanting to become one of those people that break up with someone over the phone, but he didn't want to pretend it wasn't coming when it was.

It seemed like forever before Myra finally spoke once again.

*"Eddie-Bear, that's not funny."*

"I'm not joking."

There was more silence.

*"You're cheating on me, aren't you!?" Myra spat. "Is that why you left? I knew this would happen! Oh God. Eddie, how could you do this to me!?"*

"What we have isn't healthy, Myra. We both know it."

*"You're being ridiculous! I know we've had our problems, but it's nothing we can't fix! I need you, Eddie!"*

And in that moment Eddie felt like he was confronting his mother all over again, as he did before they had gone to rescue Beverly all those years ago. Eddie swallowed the lump forming in his throat.

"But you don't need me," he told her. "You never have."

Myra was left speechless for a good moment, trying to think of

anything she could to make Eddie stay.

*"But Eddie, I'm...uh, I'm pregnant! We're going to have a baby!"*

And immediately, Eddie knew it was a lie. There was no hesitation of panic shooting through him. He knew that without a single doubt that it was a statement born out of desperation; a lie.

"Myra, I know that's bullshit."

She deflected Eddie's statement with one of her own.

*"You never answered my question if you're cheating on me."*

Eddie was taken aback. "What?"

*"How could you do this to me!? You left to go running off with another woman, didn't you!?"*

"Myra, this is exactly my point!" Eddie snapped. "You always keep assuming things, and you make me think things that I..... Myra, please. I know you're not a bad person. But you and I, we.... we never should've gotten married, and you know it."

Eddie thought that perhaps he had been too kind with his words towards Myra, but truthfully, he also had felt no resentment towards her despite how she'd act and he didn't want to hurt her. But he knew he had to tell her the truth.

*"What are you trying to say Eddie?"* Myra asked, even though she already knew the answer.

"I..... I don't love you, Myra."

And that was the truth. The truth Eddie felt horrible for admitting. He may have loved her once, but he never loved her in the way that she wanted or had hoped. Honestly speaking, Eddie wasn't sure if he knew what a real and healthy love was like. He stayed with Myra because she was familiar. She was like his overbearing mother.

And Eddie knew that deep down Myra knew that to be the truth for years, but she just hadn't wanted to admit it.

Myra was silent for much longer than before. That's when Eddie knew that she had finally let his words sink in. Eddie began to hear sobbing on the other end of the phone.

*"No one will love you as much as I do, Eddie, you know that. Please, sweetie, just come home. Don't do this to me."*

It would've been familiar and safe to go back. To pretend like the past few days in Derry never happened. To forget all over again. To keep leaving his life exactly the way it had been.

But Richie's words to him kept echoing in his head.

*'You're braver than you think.'*

In that moment he knew that even if it all frightened him, he never wanted to forget again.

"I promise that we will talk about this in person when I pick up my things, but you have to know that it's over between us. Goodbye Myra.

*"Eddie-Bear, I swear if you hang up this phone, I'll--"*

**Beep.**

Eddie couldn't believe what he had just done. It was unbelievable by his standards. But he found himself not caring as he blocked Myra's number and put his phone on silent, shoving it back into his pocket.

He stared down at his left hand where the wedding band remained on his finger. Eddie pulled off the ring, staring down at it.

For years he had lived in constant anxiety about his life. Hell, he was a risk analyst for a reason, but for once in his life he did something, damning the consequences.

Eddie used all his might to throw the ring as far as he could away from him, aiming for the makeshift garden that the hospital had near its parking lot.

He knew that practically he should've kept the ring to pawn off or



something along those lines, but honestly, he didn't care.

Because never in almost thirty years had Eddie felt freer.

---

"I'm getting a divorce!" Eddie announced with a gigantic smile.

Bill, who had been drinking water at the time, had it spray out of his nose. The abruptness of the statement threw them all off guard. Mike and Ben stared in shock while Beverly shot him a meaningful look. Eddie smiled in return. A silent kindred understanding was between the two. Whilst their situations varied, the fact remained that they were both in unhealthy marriages.

"I'm proud of you." she told him.

The others followed suit with words of support and despite the seemingly negative words of the news, Eddie couldn't help but smile. The Losers were his true family. Even after 27 years and evil space clown induced amnesia, they were still the people that loved and supported him.

Eddie didn't admit it aloud, but he felt somewhat nervous at what Richie would say about the news once he would wake up. It felt a little irrational to feel nervous, but Eddie couldn't say that he exactly put a lot of thought into the fact.

The thought continued to slip away as Richie remained asleep. Hours passed like minutes as they continued to wait for Richie to wake up.

Upon every hour an elderly nurse would come and check Richie's vitals. She had a kind grandmotherly vibe coming from her which was a very rare find in Derry of all places. Her worn out name badge had 'Greta' written on it. It was during her first check up that she brought back Richie's glasses as the doctor had taken them away from Richie for surgery and had neglected to return. She placed the glasses by the bedside table, so they were waiting for Richie for when he awoke.

She had also insisted to the Losers that they shouldn't worry and that Richie being still unconscious after everything was perfectly normal after what he had been through. It didn't bring the Losers very much ease, but they still appreciated the effort.

It seemed that they had barely started to play a game of Uno when they heard Richie's nurse, Greta, knock on the door.

"I'm sorry to interrupt but visiting hours are almost over. I'm afraid you'll have to come back in the morning."

"But aren't visiting hours until 8 o'clock?" Mike asked.

"Yes, they are. 8 o'clock in the morning and 8 o'clock at night, but look," She pointed to the clock. "See."

They were all shocked to see that it was five minutes before 8 o'clock. Without even realising it the day had become night. Ben frowned.

"Please, can't we just stay a little while longer?" Ben asked.

The nurse, Greta, hesitated, but suddenly her eyes went scanning the room. They all had the same puppy dog look in their eyes. Her eyes were filled with sympathy as she sighed.

"Rules are rules, but I know you've all been through quite an..." she paused for a moment. "...ordeal, so, while the hospital here in Derry is very restrictive on this, we still do allow one person be it family or friend to stay with a patient for some exceptions. My shifts almost over, but I'll pull some strings so one of you will be allowed to stay through the night. But the others will just have to wait until tomorrow morning's visiting hours."

"Thank you," Bill said. "I mean it, thank you."

Greta smiled and took her leave. They all liked Greta. It was good to know that there were still some good people in a place like Derry.

"So, how's this going to work?" Eddie asked. "Are we going to pull straws or something?"

The Loser's collectively looked at each other before looking back at Eddie. Under their gaze, Eddie couldn't help but begin to feel uncomfortable.

Had he said something wrong?

Mike suddenly walked over and gave his shoulder a reaffirming squeeze with a smile before silently leaving the room. The others began to do the same. Eddie's eyes widened and he hastily stood up.

"Wait. Guys, where are you going?"

Bill, being the last one at the door, turned back to Eddie.

"If he wakes up, call us. We'll see you in the morning."

"But I don't think I..." Eddie stammered. "...I don't think it should be me."

"He's in good hands with you, and we all know that," Bill reassured. "Trust me, Eddie. It needs to be you."

Eddie honestly didn't know how to respond back to that. He still hadn't even after they had all left. And just like that Eddie was left alone with Richie for the first time. He awkwardly and stiffly sat back down in the seat beside Richie's bed.

From the window, Eddie hadn't noticed that Bill had paused, watching as Eddie as he gazed down at Richie. It was the way Eddie was looking at Richie that made Bill stop and stare. Bill recognised the look in his eyes. It was a look that no one could fake.

Maybe he was mistaken, or maybe he wasn't. All Bill knew is that Eddie suddenly announcing his divorce and Richie surviving a near-death experience all happened in one day.

Bill curiously hummed to himself before finally leaving.

Eddie's hands were tensely folded, lying on his lap. He stayed like that for a while before deciding to watch some bad quality television on the tiny tv in the corner of the room. Eddie muted the volume and turned on the subtitles, so he didn't disturb anyone. Whilst he had

wanted Richie to wake up, it was just on habit that he wanted to keep quiet at night.

The new nightshift nurse came in to check on Richie. She forced a smile seeing Eddie. He did his best to awkwardly return it. She seemed shyer than Greta. She quietly went about checking what she needed to. Eddie hadn't been paying all that much attention until suddenly, her eyebrows furrowed, and she let out a disappointed hum.

"What is it?" Eddie panicked. "What's wrong?"

The nurse jolted as if suddenly remembering that he was there, immediately shook her head.

"Oh, it's nothing to worry about! He's sweating even though his temperature is a degree lower from when he was last checked. It's nothing that another blanket won't fix."

The nurse grabbed a blanket from a cabinet and gently placed it over Richie. Eddie watched her carefully as she did it. Eddie couldn't say that he was surprised that Richie was seemingly too cold in the room. The hospital had horribly thin blankets, even for a regular hospital. Eddie looked to Richie's forehead. It wasn't too noticeable at a first glance, but Richie was as the nurse had said, sweating.

"Why do you think he's sweating like this? Pain?"

She shook her head.

"I don't think so. I think it's caused from whatever is going on in his head after everything. The mind can be a scary place."

"You think it's nightmares?"

"I can't say for sure, but I also wouldn't be surprised," she frowned. "You sleep that much, not all the sleep will be dreamless."

"Is there anything that you can do?"

"Me? No. But you, maybe. You should try talking to him. Hearing a familiar voice talking to him might help."

With that, she left the room, leaving Eddie alone with his thoughts.

“Talk to him,” Eddie repeated to himself.

It was a simple task, but for Eddie it was a lot harder than it seemed. It wasn't because he was at a loss of words, it was more of the fact that he and Richie had always spoke in a way where anything truly meaningful was hidden behind sarcastic remarks and banter. So, Eddie thought he'd try and start with that.

“You better wake up soon, asshole,” Eddie's words held no bite. “You're worrying everyone.” *You're worrying me.*

Richie didn't respond, not that Eddie had expected that he would. Eddie felt his guard melt down. Maybe it would be alright, even for just a moment, to be truly sincere.

It was then that Eddie did something he knew he could never do if Richie were awake because he barely knew why he was doing it himself. Eddie slowly slid his hand down into Richie's.

Eddie had expected Richie's hands to be cold enough to make his skin crawl, but that wasn't the case. Richie's hands were surprisingly warm.

The thought of holding Richie's hand felt a little odd, but what was stranger was when he was doing it, Eddie had never felt more at ease. But Richie seemed to always have that effect on him.

Eddie gently squeezed Richie's hand.

“I'm here,” he told him. “I'm not going anywhere.”

Eddie chalked it up to his imagination, but he could've sworn that he felt Richie's fingers curl around his own.

---

He was drowning....no, not drowning.

It felt like floating just under the surface of water, unable to break through for air. The dark waters kept weighing him down while something like small echoes of memories were beckoning him break free to the surface.

*Pennywise.*

*Blood.*

*Darkness.*

He sunk further down.

He couldn't fight it. He was too cold. Too tired.

The weight kept pulling him down like an unyielding tide thrashing over him. It was like being stuck in the middle of the ocean during a storm. Tide after tide, it didn't allow him to breathe.

And further down he sunk, until he felt something new.

He felt warmth. It started from his hand and travelled through the rest of him like a fire.

Then suddenly the water that kept him down stilled. A voice in the dark silenced the water that kept him down.

***"I'm here. I'm not going anywhere."***

*..... Eddie?*

Suddenly, it was like there was no weight at all.

***EDDIE!***

Richie jolted awake with a gasp.

His first instinct was to panic. All he remembered feeling at first was terror. Richie's memories took their time slowly piecing themselves back together.

Pennywise. The lair. Eddie being killed – wait, no. That's not what happened. Richie stopped it. The two timelines he remembered were

warping together.

Eddie was killed. One week later he was standing by the kissing bridge. Five minutes after that he had been back in the cistern. He protected Eddie from *It*.

Richie squinted his eyes. The place around him was too bright – or at least, too bright to be back deep in the sewers under the Neibolt house. He looked down. He was in a bed and wearing a..... gown? Was he in a hospital?

Well, if he were in a hospital that'd explain why he felt numb all over instead of being in incredible pain. Richie attempted to look to his side and froze. He couldn't see who the blob was, but it looked a lot like Eddie, but he couldn't tell for sure.

Richie's head snapped to the other side of him. He saw the vague outline of a bedside table to his right and sitting on top of it was a black blob. Richie hoped they were his glasses. Tracing his fingers over the shape, he quickly realised that he was right, and that they were his glasses.

His mobility was still sloppy. It took a few tries to sit the glasses comfortably on his face. He once again went to look at the blob-person.

With his vision clear, he could see that it was Eddie and he was fast asleep. His head was bowed down with his arms folded across his chest as he softly snored. It didn't look very comfortable, but Eddie's expression looked like he was in complete ease.

Richie took it all in. Eddie's cheek was properly stitched up. He was also cleaned up from the grime and filth that Richie remembered last seeing him in. Eddie was clearly breathing, something that Richie hadn't dared to hope again. Did he really change fate?

*It can't be real,* Richie thought to himself. *This wasn't meant to end with a happy ending.*

Richie attempted to speak, but all that came out of him was a cough. His throat was so dry. Eddie suddenly let out a slightly louder snore.

*This must be a dream.*

Eddie's eyes began to twitch, ready to open.

*I died back in that cave. This isn't real.*

After taking a moment to wake, Eddie's eyes met Richie's and they stared at each other. Eddie had the biggest smile grow on his face.

"Holy shit! Richie! You're awake!"

Richie felt tears welling up in his eyes.

"Eddie." He whispered.

At first, Eddie hesitated, but it quickly morphed away as he hastily yet gently wrapped his arms around Richie. Eddie was careful to avoid the IV connected to Richie's arm.

Richie slowly raised his arm to return the embrace. Only Eddie would quickly go to hug someone, only to make it the softest of hugs at the same time. He shut his eyes, taking in the moment. While Richie knew in his heart that what he was experiencing was real, on the slim chance that it was all some a sick illusion or dream, Richie still wanted to imprint the moment in his mind.

"You're an asshole." Such words would be offensive if it hadn't come from a sniffing Eddie.

"Are you crying?" Richie croaked.

It was a miracle that Eddie had understood him at all. Eddie pulled away sooner than Richie had hoped, but he hid his disappointment well.

"No." Eddie sniffed again. He wasn't lying. He wasn't crying, but he was however very close to it.

Richie didn't like seeing that look on his face. He attempted to say something to comfort the other, but the words morphed into another dry cough.



Eddie completely disregarded his near tears like it never happened. He clicked down at the call nurse button before he grabbed a cup of water with a plastic straw nearby.

“You want some water?”

Richie nodded. Eddie guided the straw to Richie, and he took long gulps of the water. Never had room temperature water tasted so good. As Richie was just about done with the water, a nurse popped her head into the room. She saw Richie was awake and said something about getting a doctor.

Being left alone once more with Eddie, Richie attempted to clear his throat.

“What happened?” His voice was still a little gravelly, but it was still a vast improvement from what it had been.

“Well, what do you remember?” Eddie hated to answer the question with another question, but it was a matter of where to begin.

Richie leaned back into his pillow and he shut his eyes.

“*It* got me. Then I remember being carried out by Ben, and then.... I don’t know.”

“That sounds about right,” Eddie mumbled. “After we killed.... *It*, the entire water way and the house on Neibolt came crashing down. We made it out just in time. We rushed you here to the hospital. You needed multiple blood transfusions and surgery. You almost died, Richie.”

Richie noticed that Eddie was staring right into the floor. His eyes anywhere but Richie.

“None of this is your fault, Eds.” Richie had never sounded more serious.

Eddie eyes darted back to Richie. He hadn’t mentioned anything, but Richie knew right away what was eating at him.

“Don’t call me that.” Eddie tried to sound like he had bite, but it

sounded far too soft for that. It also didn't help that he had a ghost of a smile hovering over his face.

"Ah, Mr Tozier, you're awake!" The doctor strolled in, interrupting the moment. "I'm Dr Simins, your head doctor."

"What's up, doc?" Richie smiled at his fail of an impression of a certain cartoon rabbit.

Eddie rolled his eyes. Conscious for less than five minutes and Richie proved that he was still....well, Richie.

"I'll just have to go through some procedural things with you, so bear with me," The doctor grabbed a pen to write on his clip board. "So, Mr Tozier, do you remember what happened to you?"

"An alien spider clown impaled me with its leg."

The doctor paused for a moment before he laughed.

"Good to see your sense of humour is intact."

Eddie pretended to laugh alongside the doctor, but it was to cover up his face cringing at the mention of what really happened. Only Richie would joke about the truth that'd probably get him sent to a psychiatrist.

"Seriously though, I don't remember much." Richie lied. Even though he was slightly incoherent, Richie knew that the others wouldn't have told anyone the truth of what happened.

"You were impaled and lost a lot of blood. We had to undergo an emergency skin grafting surgery to cover your wound," Dr Simins walked over and flicked through Richie's charts. "There seems to be no complications so far, but we won't know until a few more days. Are you in any pain, Mr Tozier?"

Richie had to think about it for a moment. He was slightly distracted over the fact that Eddie was so seemingly disinterested in the conversation as he was on his phone.

"Uh, not really. It's kind of more like a numb pain right now."

Dr Simins nodded.

“That’s better than I hoped. We’ll do our best to make sure you’re comfortable for now. You’ve been unconscious for a whole day.”

Richie blinked. “Really?”

“Yes, but that’s to be expected. You need your rest. Deep breath in, please.”

Richie did as he was told but continued to ask his questions.

“How long until I can get out of here, doc?”

Dr Simins went to check Richie’s blood pressure but spoke as he continued the routine run down.

“You were as close to death’s door as a person can get, Mr Tozier. The recovery process will take time. I would like to keep you here until we know that the skin graft is healing properly which won’t be 1 to 2 weeks by our normal protocol.”

“Not any sooner?” Richie whined. “No offense, doc, but I want to get out of Derry asap.”

“I wouldn’t recommend it, no. But if you are *that* desperate to get out, and it is healing well, I would say maybe four to five more days. But that is if and only if it is healing and you’re are strong enough. And even after you leave here, you’ll need to be very careful. You’ll need to avoid doing any activities that could stretch or injure the graft. But we can give you more of rundown of the out of hospital care when we do get to that point.”

Richie opened his mouth to retort a remark more than likely about sex, but after seeing the stern look from Eddie who had finally gotten off his phone, he opted not to.

“Okay. Thanks doc.”

“At this point, you’re doing reasonably well. You might even be able to give eating a try if you’re not feeling too nauseous.”

“I do love that hospital grade jello.” Richie remarked.

Dr Simins laughed once more. It was a little ironic at the doctor was laughing when Richie was telling him the truth. Richie really did get impaled by a demonic spider clown and Richie did in fact enjoy any type of jello.

“I’ll be back in a few hours to check on you. If you have any more questions don’t hesitate to ask me or any of the nurses.”

Richie nodded and Dr Simins left, Eddie’s judging gaze still on him as he left the room. So easily the doctor was ready to give up on Richie. And for that reason alone, Eddie couldn’t help but think that Dr Simins was a complete dickhead. But on the other hand, he still saved Richie’s life, so he had decided that he would tolerate him.

Once the two were alone, Richie saw Eddie’s intense expression.

“Is the doctor not interesting enough for you?” Richie attempted to lighten the mood. “I’m surprised you didn’t jump in with your own expertise Dr K or were you just on web M.D that whole time?”

Eddie smiled. He couldn’t even bring himself to pretend that he was annoyed. He missed Richie’s sarcasm.

“If you must know, I was texting the others that your ass is awake. They’ll be here soon.”

It was all oddly good timing. Richie had woken up fifteen minutes before visiting hours would start up again. When Eddie texted the others, the Losers were about to leave the Inn, ready to be let in as soon as the time hit 8’clock.

“Wait, why weren’t the others here?” Richie hadn’t honestly thought to why it was only Eddie with him.

“They had to go back to the Inn,” Eddie didn’t know why he felt nervous suddenly. “The hospital said they would only let one of us stay, so I did.”

Richie felt affection surge through him, but as soon as the feeling arose, he buried such feelings back down deep within himself. Richie

didn't want to humour himself.

"Thanks, Eds."

Eddie decided to let the nickname slip that time and he instead smiled back at his old friend. It was seeing Richie finally awake and talking that Eddie couldn't help but be reminded of what had happened.

The blood. The panic. The lazy attempt on bandaging his side in the car ride to the hospital. It was something that Eddie never wanted to experience again.

Richie suddenly began to lazily blink. Eddie felt his heart jolt with panic.

"Hey, stay awake." He softly shook Richie by the shoulder.

"I'm awake," Richie reassured as he rubbed at his eyes. "I just trying to get used to the lights again. It's pretty bright in here."

"Does it hurt to look at bright lights?" Eddie asked, slowly going to stand up. "You might have a concussion. Do I need to go get Dr Simins?"

Richie grabbed Eddie's wrist.

"Hey, Eddie, it's fine. I'm good, really. It'll just take a minute. I didn't mean to freak you out."

Speaking honestly, Richie felt exhausted enough to go back to sleep, but he fought against it. He had just woken up and he was getting the chance to talk with Eddie. He didn't want to waste such precious time by sleeping.

Eddie slowly lowered himself back into the chair.

"Okay." Something akin to relief began to settle the panic that sat in the pit of Eddie's stomach.

Not that Eddie would ever admit to it, but whenever Richie would say something to him seriously, it was like Eddie would suddenly feel

that everything would be okay.

Suddenly his memory beckoned a certain memory to return to him. The last thing Richie had tried to say to him.

*“Eds, I’ve always.... I ...”*

Eddie couldn’t help but feel the call of curiosity.

“Hey, you probably don’t remember, but you were trying to tell me something before you passed out yesterday.”

Richie eyebrows furrowed.

“I did?”

“Yeah,” Eddie didn’t know why he felt disappointed. “Something about that you’ve always...did something? I don’t know. You never got to finish.”

Richie was silent for a moment, obviously trying to think back on what happened. Richie didn’t have to think too long about it before his eyes widened and he breathed out a very quiet ‘oh’. It came back to him. Whilst his memory was in pieces, and Richie only had fragments to go by, he knew what he was going to say to Eddie. It was what he had wanted to say but never said.

Richie felt like his stomach dropped, realising that he had almost confessed to Eddie. Richie’s face remained frozen in a panicked expression.

Eddie’s head tilted to the side at the sight.

Richie opened his mouth to say something, but before either could say anything more, they heard a commotion approaching Richie’s room.

And before they knew it, the others were at the door with Beverly barging in first.

“Richie!” Beverly practically skipped over and placed a chaste kiss on Richie’s forehead.

The others all got their turn to hug Richie. Ben hugged him the longest.

While Richie was a comedian, it was strange to see such genuine smiles on peoples faces that were around him. With that thought in mind, Richie made a mental note to start going back to writing his new material.

“You okay there, Haystack?” Richie asked, finally getting Ben to let go.

“Sorry Richie, it’s just.... it’s just really good to see you awake again, man,” Ben sighed. “There was so much blood. I’m just glad that you held on long enough to get that skin graft.”

Beverly walked over to Ben, rubbing a comforting hand along his arm. Without thinking, Ben then wrapped the arm around her waist.

Richie saw it all unfold.

*Wait.....WAIT!*

He felt a lightbulb go off in his head.

“Well it’s about fucking time!” Richie happily exclaimed.

Eddie couldn’t help but smile at the exchange. The couple looked obviously embarrassed as Richie began to bombard them with questions.

“I’m out for one day and the two of you are a thing? What the fuck? Were you planning on telling me, or was that random arm hold the announcement? C’mon spill the details!”

Bill and Mike and even begun stifling with laughter. They all honestly felt like middle school kids once again with all the ‘drama’.

“January embers.” Ben took Beverly’s hand into his own, lovingly gazing at her.

“My heart burns there too.” She squeezed his hand back looking back at him with the same intensity.

"I'm sure that was super meaningful, but I have no idea what the fuck that means," Richie got a good chuckle out of Mike from that one. "Those walls at the Inn are pretty thin. You didn't disturb the neighbours last night, did you?"

*"Beep Beep, Richie."* Ben shook his head as Beverly too sighed.

Richie glanced over at Bill, who behind Ben, slowly and awkwardly nodded, confirming the answer to the question.

Richie started laughing, but immediately stopped as he felt a sharp pain run up him from his side.

"Woah, you okay?" Eddie asked, his hands hovering nearby, ready to assist if needed.

"Yeah, I'm good," Richie had to breath in and out a few times to calm the fiery pain. "I probably shouldn't move around too much."

"You think?" Eddie sassed. "The less you move the better the skin grafts will heal."

Mike nodded.

"He's right. You shouldn't try to mess with that."

"Wait, so where did they get the skin for the grafts?" Richie's hand ghosted over his wound. "Don't they take skin from another place on the body for that?"

Mike was the one to explain it to Richie when everyone else snorted like children over it.

"They took skin out of your ass, Rich."

"Great. Love that." Richie sarcastically remarked.

"Wait, so you're telling us that you haven't tried to look at it yet?" Bill asked.

At that, Richie immediately lifted the blanket and peered down the hospital gown. He picked at the bandage enough to see what the skin



graft looked like. Richie grimaced at the sight, dropping the bandage. In short, it wasn't a pretty sight. Richie was glad that he was on enough pain killers that he couldn't feel it.

"Well, there goes my hot bikini bod," Richie pretended to frown. "What will I do during my summer's now?"

They all went quiet at that. While Richie had tried to make it a joke, it just didn't sit well with them. Richie had almost died less than a day ago. It was still sinking in.

In fact, Richie still hadn't let all the events sink in for him either. He had saved Eddie from a fate that he had to witness and live through. Nothing made sense.

But what he did know is that during his 'second' time against *It*, Richie wasn't involved with killing *It*. He needed to know what happened as he was side lined.

"*It's* really gone then?" Richie asked.

All was quiet until Mike patted Richie's leg.

"Yeah, *It's* dead. We crushed *It's* heart."

Richie let out a large sigh of relief, sinking back into his bed. They did it exactly like last time.... or like he had seen but didn't happen? He didn't know which was which and thinking about it just made his brain hurt.

"Life's work is finally over then, huh Mikey?" Richie smirked. "Who knew that bullying the clown to death would work."

Mike blinked for a moment and thought about what Richie had just said.

"Technically," Mike's eyes began to widen. "You did, Richie."

Richie's head perked back up.

"Come again?"

"You knew," Mike felt it all coming together. "You told us how to kill *It*. To make it small. How did you know?"

All eyes were on Richie. All were looks of confusion. The only exception was Beverly. She looked at Richie with empathy in her eyes. She knew something that they didn't.

"I need to speak to Richie for a few minutes," Beverly announced. "Alone."

She stared at Ben. A silent conversation happened between the two. It took Ben a moment to realise what she was getting at.

"Oh," Ben didn't mean to say that first part aloud. "Let's go get coffee. There's a café around the corner of the hospital. Come on."

Eddie was about to object but he knew after what Beverly had told him yesterday, talking to Richie about it wasn't a surprise. Reluctantly the others left.

Once they were alone, Beverly placed her hand over Richie's.

"Richie, you saw Eddie die, didn't you? In the deadlights?"

He immediately stiffened and he slowly turned to face Beverly. That's when it dawned on Richie why Beverly knew. She had seen their deaths before.

"You saw it too?"

She bit her lip.

"It was never a clear image. It was only after what happened to you that I realised what it really was. I'm so sorry. You and Eddie almost died. I wish I knew-"

"It's not your fault, Bev," Richie squeezed her hand. "The stupid fucking clown is to blame, and hey, it all worked out in the end."

She finally cracked a smile which Richie had been hoping to see.

"Yeah, I guess it did," Beverly agreed. "But for what it's worth, I'm so

glad you're okay, Richie. You almost slipped away on us."

"You can't get rid of me that easily," Richie smirked.

Beverly's smile began to fade.

"But what I don't get is how did you know about how to kill *It*. I only ever saw your deaths."

Richie started to feel his side slightly throb in pain. A hand instinctively moved over to it, softly rubbing over it to try and soothe it.

He knew that Beverly was the only person that'd at least somewhat understand what happened. Richie told her the truth.

"When I was stuck in those deadlights, I don't know, for me it was..... different. I lived...felt...saw? I don't fucking know. All I know is that I lived a whole week after Eddie died and we killed *It*."

Beverly's mouth went agape.

"What?"

"I don't know," Richie shrugged. "One minute I'm on the kissing bridge, the next I'm falling on my ass back in that cavern."

Beverly was quiet for a moment, thinking about it all. Some things just didn't make sense.

"But why would the deadlights show you how to kill *It*?" Beverly asked.

"To fuck with us?" Richie suggested, but honestly, he didn't know the answer either.

Beverly leaned forward, a light glimmering in her eyes. An idea was forming in her mind.

"I know this sounds crazy, but what if it wasn't the deadlights."

"What?"

“Crazier stuff has happened,” Beverly shrugged. “What if it was something else that sent you back here?”

“Well, if it’s another murderous space shapeshifter, I swear-”

“Not like that,” Beverly glanced over at the clock. “What if what you saw really happened, and you were sent back to change it?”

“Like time travel?”

Beverly shook her head.

“Like a second chance,”

Richie was thrown off guard.

A second chance. A literal redo of a single moment in time that ended up saving a life. Something like those only existed in movies and books, it couldn’t be real. And yet, Eddie was alive.

“Maybe it was a part of the deadlights, maybe not. We might never know,” Beverly began to smile. “But I guess what we both know is that you were meant to save Eddie yesterday.”

“That’s a nice thought.” Richie admitted, his eyes began to feel heavy once more.

Beverly saw Richie struggling.

“You know you can sleep whenever you want, right?”

Richie shook his head.

“I’ve slept enough.” Richie didn’t have to say that he felt guilty for being unconscious for so long.

“We’re all still going to be here when you wake up,” She kindly pulled the glasses off from his face. “The best thing you can do is rest to get better.”

Beverly’s presence was always so soothing. That still hadn’t changed from their years apart. Richie did truly adore her.

With Beverly stroking his hair, it was almost impossible not to be sucked away into the abyss of sleep.

---

Richie felt so much better after that nap, or at least, he hoped it had been a nap. He didn't want to wake up and hear that another day had passed.

He saw a hand in front of him holding his glasses out in front of him. Richie mumbled his thanks and went to look at who was sitting next to him.

It was Bill.

"Good afternoon," Bill greeted. "And before you ask, you've only been asleep for a few hours. It's only 12 o'clock."

Richie groaned.

"I didn't mean to fall back asleep. Blame Bev."

Bill laughed.

"More like we should be thanking her. You need your rest."

Richie rubbed the sleep from his eyes.

"So, I've been told." Richie grumbled.

It was then that he realised that Bill was the only one in the room with them.

"Where is everyone?"

"They just went out to get lunch in the cafeteria down the hall about five minutes ago. I decided to stay back with you just in case you woke up. Eddie wanted to stay but he hasn't eaten since yesterday. We had to kick him out."

“Why hasn’t Eddie eaten?” Richie couldn’t help but sound worried.

“After your surgery he hasn’t left your side,” Bill admitted. “I think you scared him the most.”

“I know.” Richie whispered.

While he felt bad about it, he still preferred it over the alternative. Richie decided to change the subject to something he had noticed when they spoke before his talk with Beverly.

“You haven’t been stuttering,” Richie pointed out. “Is it still coming and going?”

Bill leant back in his chair.

“No, at least, I don’t think so. Back with *It* I .... I finally faced some stuff I’d been burying down. About Georgie,” Bill folded his arms, almost hugging himself. “After I finally faced that fear, I haven’t stuttered since. I can’t explain it.”

“I’m proud of you, Big Bill.” Richie shot him a tired smile.

“Thanks, Rich.”

If Richie were being honest with himself, he was a little envious of Bill.

Bill had always been brave, which was something that Richie had struggled with his whole life. Sure, Richie could bravely stand up to a giant clown monster, but that was because a clown wasn’t what he feared most.

For Bill, it was facing and accepting what happened to his little brother, Georgie.

For Richie, his true deep fear was the part of himself that he kept hidden deep down within. A secret that he never dared to speak of. With and without memories, the fear had bound his secret, locked and chained away.

But almost dying had a certain way of changing one’s perspective on

things. While Richie feared what would happen if he spoke about it, he was more scared of what his life would end up if he didn't tell the people in his life.

For the first time in his entire life, Richie wanted to be braver than the fear from the secret he kept. He didn't want it to control him forever because that's exactly what Pennywise would've wanted.

*Fuck the clown. Fuck the clown. Fuck the clown.*

"Bill."

"Yeah?"

"You're still one of my best friends. So, I'm about to tell you something I have never told anyone."

Richie's sudden intensity was almost scaring Bill.

".... Okay?"

"I'm... I'm... I'm g-...ga-..." The words felt like it kept getting stuck in his throat. Fear was holding him down. The same fear that Pennywise had used against him. The same fear that had haunted him for almost thirty years.

But if anything was stronger than his deep imbedded fear, it was spite.

The clown had shown him a life where Eddie had died. And *It* had almost killed him and all those he held dear on multiple occasions. But worst of all, the clown had taken away Stan from them.

He mentally chanted to himself once more.

*Fuck the clown. Fuck the clown. Fuck the clown!*

With all the strength he had, he finally pushed the words out of his throat

"I'm gay."

Those two words carried so much weight. It was finally out, the truth that Richie had hidden his whole life both in and out of Derry. The one thing he never allowed himself to say aloud.

The moment it slipped from his lips Richie felt his fear return attempting to consume him. He had millions of scenarios of what Bill would do or say. None were kind. However, the one which happened was one that Richie hadn't ever imagined.

Bill was silent for a total of two seconds before he nodded with a smile.

"Okay. Cool."

A few seconds passed and Richie couldn't help but stare.

"Wait what?"

"What?" Bill blinked.

"That's...." Richie didn't know where he was going with it. "...That's it?"

Bill lopsidedly smiled.

"What did you think I'd say?"

Richie shrugged. "I don't know. I just thought it'd be more.... I don't know."

"Did you think I was.... homophobic?" Bill's eyebrows furrowed.

"No!... Yes? I don't know! We grew up in fucking Derry." Richie averted his gaze away from Bill. He figured that he might as well tell him more while he was on a roll. "That's what the clown had over me. My *'dirty little secret'*."

Bill slowly placed a comforting hand on Richie's arm causing him to look back at him.

"Richie, I'm glad you told me, but you ought to know that not me, and especially not any of the other Losers would think of you as any



different because of that,” Bill gave Richie’s arm a light squeeze. “We love you, Rich. Nothing will change that. Loser’s stick together, remember? Now and always.”

Richie couldn’t hold it back anymore. Everything he had imagined in his fear came tumbling down. It came spilling down through tears.

The repression. The fear. The overwhelming relief. The newfound freedom of finally saying it.

*I’m gay.*

It was all too much. Richie became a sobbing mess and Bill held Richie as he fell apart. And for a few minutes, Richie allowed himself to be comforted.

His whole life he had kept it a secret, telling no one. He figured he deserved the let down his guard, at least for a while. Richie let himself have it for one minute before he pulled himself away. Any longer would threaten his own self-image.

“Sorry, but I ought to put a break in my own self-pity party.” Richie wiped away any evidence of his tears.

Bill knew what Richie was doing. He was building up his walls again. He decided to let it slide until Richie had his pride back, but not before letting him know that it was okay.

“Don’t be sorry for being who you are, Richie. Never be sorry for that.”

It was a strange feeling for Richie. It was almost like opening a can of soda after it had been shaken up too much, so it all came spilling out at once. The whole truth came slipping from his mouth before he could stop it.

“I could never be with anyone. I got scared, and even on the rare moments when I wasn’t, I felt like something was always holding me back,” Richie had never confessed so much at once, but it just wouldn’t stop. “But being back here in Derry, it made me realise why. And it’s because I’m still in love with my first love. That I’m still not over him. Pretty pathetic, right?”

Bill slowly smiled once more.

“Well, would you look at that. Richie ‘Trashmouth’ Tozier staring in his own teen romance novel.”

“Shut up,” Richie grinned. “What if I told you, that it was you. Maybe I want to suck your di-”

“*Beep Beep*, Richie.”

Richie’s smile grew. “It’s not you, don’t worry.”

“You’re breaking my heart here, Rich,” Bill playfully remarked. “But seriously, who is it?”

Richie decided that it was enough spilling the beans for one day. He tightly attempted to keep his lips sealed.

“Nope, time to stop this teenage girl slumber party moment. That secret stays with me. I have had enough of all the sharing and caring for one day.”

Bill smirked. Pieces of what he was seeing and hearing were coming together.

“It’s Eddie, isn’t it?”

Richie flinched and kept quiet. Bill got it right in his first go. He wanted to deny it, to make sure that fact forever stayed locked away. But instead, he looked over to Bill and his eyes did all the talking for him. No words needed to be spoken for Bill get the message.

Bill smiled and gave another encouraging squeeze to Richie’s arm.

“How did you.... you know?”

Bill was silent for a few seconds. He chose to choose his words carefully.

“Just a few small things in our time back home. I mean, after all this time and you still try to protect and piss Eddie off the most. As kids it could be scrapped off as being a kid, but since we’re older now, it

sticks out.”

“You’re now officially the only person to ever know about repressed little feelings.” Richie half-heartedly joked.

Bill looked down and smiled.

“I think Stan knew.”

Richie was caught off guard at that.

“What makes you say that?”

“You should’ve seen how he always rolled his eyes at you and Eddie,” Bill explained, the smile never leaving his face. “I mean, you and Eddie, the two of you were *always* bickering. Looking back, it was totally flirting, and I think Stan noticed and thought that it’d only be a matter of time.”

“As if,” Richie snorted. “Besides, it wasn’t flirting.”

“Yes, it was.”

“Wasn’t.”

“Was.”

Richie groaned, slamming his head back into his pillow. A comfortable silence fell over the two friends.

“I miss him.” Richie confessed. Maybe he wouldn’t have said it if he weren’t so emotionally drained, but it also felt good to finally be able to talk to someone he trusted.

“Me too.” Bill whispered.

Richie couldn’t help but think of how different everything would have gone if Stan had lived and came to Derry. Out of all the Loser’s, Stanley was the one person he had been friends with longer than anyone else. They had known each other since they were four years old. Forgetting him only to remember him once again to find out he died because of an evil alien was more horrible than words could

describe.

Richie then remembered the words of Stan's letter. A letter that might only be real in his memory. He remembered what was written.

***'I lived my whole life afraid. Afraid of what would come next. Afraid of what I might leave behind.... Don't. Be who you want to be. Be proud. And if you find someone worth holding onto. Never ever let them go.'***

*I'll do it, Stan,* Richie silently promised. *I'll be proud and I won't ever let go.*

---

Richie twirled his spoon around the suspiciously sloppy rice. He wouldn't have known it was stew if the nurse hadn't told him. Richie hadn't eaten in over 24 hours and while he had some semblance of an appetite, it was gone the moment he laid eyes on whatever was in front of him.

The others were playing a game of pairs around Richie's bed while they expected him to eat. Eddie was distracted the entire time, his eyes kept darting over to what Richie was doing. The others were beginning to get distracted by it too.

It wasn't until Richie started slapping the stew with his spoon that someone decided to speak up. And that someone was Mike.

"Richie, you need to eat something."

"It looks like someone already did and puked it back up on this plate," Richie tossed his spoon to the side. "Do you think this is all hospital food or do the staff here at Derry just hate me?"

"Come on, don't be so dramatic," Beverly cajoled. "I'm sure it isn't *that* bad."

Richie looked Bev dead in the eye and stabbed his spoon into the

stew. Richie let go and the spoon stayed in place.

They all collectively stared at the spoon. A few seconds ticked by and there was still no sign of it falling or budging. It just stood up, supported by the stew.

“We need to get him real food.” Eddie concluded aloud.

The others all nodded and hummed in agreement.

“Please, anything,” Richie pleaded. “A sandwich. Fruit. I don’t care. Just not anything like this slop.”

Bill suddenly felt a light bulb going off in his head.

“They have that deli open down the block. We could probably get something for Richie down there.”

“Yes!” Richie urged. “Real food.”

“I think we should all go up to the store while we’re out getting things,” Bill nonchalantly continued. “Stock up on some snacks for later too.”

Richie’s eyes narrowed at Bill. He knew he was up to something.

“That doesn’t sound too bad, actually.” Ben agreed, completely oblivious to Bill’s plan.

“Eddie, you should stay here with Richie. Keep him company. If you want anything up at the store, you can just text one of us.”

Richie quickly realised what Bill was trying to do.

*Bill, you sneaky son of a –*

“Yeah, okay,” Eddie nodded, unfazed by it all.

Beverly looked between Bill, Richie, and Eddie, then Bill again. It took her a moment, but then she began to smile.

“Come on, boys. Let’s go,” she started to push a confused Mike out the door. “We won’t be long.”

Ben followed Bill out the door and they were gone, leaving Eddie and Richie alone.

Richie barely felt like he could look Eddie in the eye. He would've felt far less embarrassed about it all if Bill had purposely tried to leave him alone with Eddie.

*God dammit, I feel like some lovelorn teenager.* Richie mentally groaned at himself. He was 40 years old, not some 16-year-old.

But then again, he was a forty-year-old man who had just come out for the first time, and he was left alone with the man he had been in love with since his childhood.

In the end what it all could be summed up to is that he hated Derry and he hated *It* even more for making him forget in the first place.

It was silent between the pair for a total of five seconds before Eddie abruptly broke it.

"I'm divorcing my wife." Eddie almost sounded too excited to tell Richie. "I didn't get the chance to tell you before. The others already know."

Richie had to stop his mouth from going agape.

*Be supportive. Be supportive.*

"O-Oh? I'm sorry. That must.... suck."

*Nailed it.*

Eddie softly shook his head.

"Not really. It's been building up for a long time. Besides, I practically married my mom, dude."

Richie slowly began to smile as he remembered when Eddie had shown him a picture of Myra when they were out for dinner when they first returned to Derry. The fact that his wife was the spitting image of his mother was the first thought that came to Richie when he laid eyes on the photo.

“Just remember you said that and not me.”

“Shut up,” Eddie rolled his eyes. “Anyway, so when I got back to New York I’m going to do the whole works. Get the divorce papers. Quit my job. I’ll probably find a nice one-man apartment. Maybe get a dog, I don’t know.”

“Wait. You’re going to let her keep the apartment?”

Eddie nodded.

“I need a fresh start. I don’t feel like I can do that in that apartment.”

“But it might take weeks for you to find something in your price range, right?”

“I don’t know. Maybe? I’ll figure it out as I go.”

And then it was in that moment that Richie decided to say something that scared the absolute shit out of himself.

“Stay with me.”

Eddie suddenly smiled and laughed.

“I’m being serious, Richie.”

“So am I,” Richie stated. “You wanted a fresh start, why not LA?”

Eddie silently stared at Richie. The realisation of how entirely serious Richie was slowly dawned on him.

“Move across country to LA?” Eddie deadpanned.

“Yes.”

“But I won’t have a job over there in LA. It’ll take a while to go job hunting.”

Richie shrugged.

“So?”

“So,” Eddie repeated. “What I’m saying is that you save my life and now you’re saying it’s okay to mooch off of you?”

It was, of course, a rhetorical question, but Richie wasn’t having any of it.

“It wouldn’t be mooching,” Richie put on his best high-class British accent, “You’d be my guest of honour at castle Tozier.”

Eddie sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“Richie, it can’t be just that simple.”

“Why can’t it?”

Eddie opened his mouth to retort back an answer, but nothing came out. That had been a good question. Why couldn’t it be simple? What was really stopping him? It wasn’t the fact that he would have to deal with his soon to be ex-wife, or quitting his job, or even updating his living information. Those things were quite simple in the long run of things.

Eddie then came to the realisation that it was fear that was stopping him. The same type of fear that made him stay with Myra and kept him so restricted in life. He leant back into his chair with a sigh.

“Why are you insisting so badly?”

“Because I want you to stay with me. Twenty-seven years without you is enough.” *Shit. Did I just say that out loud?*

Richie wanted to blame it on coming out to Bill earlier on his sudden loose lips. His fear ate away at his mind as Eddie silently stared at him.

*Shit. Shit. Shit.*

Richie decided to blame it on the pain-relieving drugs he was on, but before he could, Eddie in a soft voice gave his answer.

“Alright.”



Richie blinked. Had he heard right?

“What?”

“I’ll stay with you,” Eddie clarified. “As long as it’s okay with you.”

“It is.” Richie knew he answered a little too quickly, but he didn’t care.

“That’s that then.” Eddie pat his hand over Richie’s.

Richie reigned back all the things he analysed as over thinking, but he could’ve sworn that Eddie’s hand lingered for a few seconds longer than he needed to.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

A/N: I've got some housekeeping notes here: Firstly, I feel like I need to state that I only know snippets of what happens in the actual book of "IT", as I have never read it. The basis of canon that this fic is centred around is the film canon, with some minor book(?) canons to suit the fic. For example, apparently Bill and Richie are meant to be closer as friends in the book than they were shown in the film canon, so with that, I decided to play into that a bit more in this fic.

I also tried to keep to real medical terminology as well as I could, but I'm no doctor and hope that the research I did for it matches well enough to a real life scenario.

One chapter left to go! Hope you enjoyed, and I'll see you soon in the last chapter!

### **Author's Note:**

A/N: It is oddly satisfying to finally write characters that swear.

A few side notes, the lack of stuttering from Bill will be addressed next chapter. Also spoiler alert, Richie isn't dead. This is a fix-it fic, not a troll. But while it is a fix it, it's not going to be without some angst y'all. I don't think I'm capable of all fluff.